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CONAN THE KING
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"KNOW YE, O PRINCE, KING CONAN SHATTERED THE PRIDE OF ARGOS WITH HIS SWORD, SLEW XANTALUS WITH HIS BARE HANDS, SACKED THE CROWN CITY OF MESSANTIA AND PUT IT TO THE TORCH. YET HE STILL BOUGHT REVENGE ON THE SORCERER, CRASSUS, AND WAS TROUBLED OVER THE FATE OF HIS SON, PRINCE CONN. AND THESE THINGS CAST A SHADOW OVER...

THE SPOILS OF VICTORY

FROM THE NEMEDIAN CHRONICLES

CONAN!

CONAN!

STORY: DON KRAAR
PENCILS: MIKE DOCHERTY
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CONAN! CONAN!
ARGOS IS YOURS, CONAN. WE'RE READY TO SMASH OPHIR.
LISTEN TO THEM, MY LIEGE. THEY'RE CALLING YOU "CONAN THE EMPEROR".
AYE, CONAN-- "HYBORIAN EMPEROR", THE TITLE SUITS MY FATHER-IN-LAW.
WHAT IS THIS, PALLANTIDES?
PART OF THE SPOILS OF VICTORY, MY FRIEND-- THE CROWN OF ARGOS. IT'S YOURS NOW, RIGHT OF CONQUEST.

I DIDN'T COME TO ARGOS FOR THIS, PALLANTIDES.

AH, BUT IT'S YOURS JUST THE SAME. YOU CAN DO WITH IT WHAT YOU LIKE.

CONAN!

WHAT GOOD IS AN EMPIRE IF I HAVE NO SON TO INHERIT IT?

THIS CROWN ISN'T WORTH MY SON'S LIFE, PALLANTIDES.

WE HAVE MEN SEARCHING FOR HIM RIGHT NOW. WE'LL FIND HIM, OLD FRIEND-- ONE WAY OR ANOTHER.

MAKE SURE THAT YOU DO. I HAVE TO KNOW WHETHER CONN IS ALIVE OR DEAD.

CONAN--CONAN THE EMPEROR!

LOOK AT THEM--AS IF THEY HAVEN'T SEEN ENOUGH BLOOD...

WE STILL HAVE TO FACE QUEEN LEORA AND HER OPHIRIAN LEGIONS. THEN YOUR REVENGE ON AQUILONIA'S INVADERS WILL BE COMPLETE.

MY REVENGE WON'T BE COMPLETE UNTIL I WRING CRASSUS'S NECK.

CONSOLE YOURSELF WITH THIS, MY KING--- *THE ROYAL SCEPTER OF ARGOS AND THE ROYAL TREASURY.*

THE *ROYAL TREASURY!* I NEED *THAT* TO PAY THESE MEN.

LOOT!

THIS MAKES IT ALL WORTHWHILE!

PILE IT UP FOR THE KING TO SEE, COMRADES!

THE SCEPTER, KING CONAN? YOU'VE EARNED IT.

GIVE IT HERE, RUFIO.

IT'LL BE GOOD FOR SOMETHING.

DIVIDE THE SPOILS, CONAN! YOU'RE EMPEROR NOW!

AYE!

AYE!

GIVE US OUR SHARE, KING CONAN!

QUIET, FOOLS!

SILENCE!

YOU WANT GOLD?

FIND MY SON--FIND PRINCE CONN!

AND FIND CRASSUS!

GENTLY, MY LIEGE...

CRASSUS IS DEAD!

ZELATA...?

AYE, CONAN, IT IS, I, ZELATA. ONCE AGAIN, THE GODS COMMAND ME TO REVEAL THE TRUTH TO YOU.

CRASSUS IS DEAD! ANOTHER MAGICIAN IS PLOTTING AGAINST YOU. BE WISE ENOUGH TO FEAR HIM.

AS FOR THE FATE OF YOUR SON, PRINCE CONN...

BEHOLD...

MITRA'S GHOST--LOOK!

GAZE ON THIS!

CROM'S BLOOD--IT'S CONN IN THE CLAWS OF THAT THING I SAW IN THE SKY OVER MESSANTIA. I TOOK IT FOR AN OMEN...

"AYE, THAT IT WAS. NOW SEE YOUR SON LOCKED IN MORTAL COMBAT WITH THE SPAWN OF ARALLU--A MONSTER THAT WAS ONCE A MAN--A MAN YOU KNEW AS CRASSUS!"

"CRASSUS BARTERED HIS HUMANITY FOR GREATER OCCULT POWER IN ORDER TO DESTROY YOU. HE INVOKED THE SPELL KNOWN AS "THE BLOOD THE SERPENT". WITNESS WHAT BECAME OF HIM...

"BY THE TIME THAT PRINCE CONN ENCOUNTERED HIM IN THE LABYRINTH BENEATH THE ROYAL PALACE OF ARGOS, CRASSUS WAS NO LONGER A MAN. YOUR SON WITNESSED CRASSUS'S METAMORPHOSIS."

"BUT THAT DID NOT PREVENT PRINCE CONN FROM SLAYING HIM. TOGETHER, THEY PLUNGED INTO THE KHOROTAS RIVER."

"THE WATERS OF THE KHOROTAS DID NOT TAKE YOUR SON'S LIFE. BUT UNLESS YOU ACT QUICKLY, IT WOULD HAVE BEEN BETTER THAT THEY DID."

"FOR NOW HE IS IN THE HANDS OF YOUR ENEMIES...

WHOSE FACE IS THIS, ZELATA?

I KNOW THOSE FEATURES--- KNOW THEM ALL TOO WELL.

"HE IS KNOWN AS CALIASTROS, HIS MOTHER WAS A WITCH, AND HIS FATHER WAS A DEMON, OR SO THEY SAY. ALL OF CORINTHIA TREMBLES IN HIS SHADOW.

CALIASTROS--- THE MURDERER OF MY OLD MASTER, KING AECHIDES OF CORINTHIA! I SWORE THAT I WOULD DESTROY HIM!

AYE! I KNOW THE TALE.. CALIASTROS MURDERED KING AECHIDES BUT THE QUEEN AND HER CHILDREN ESCAPED AT LEAST THAT'S THE STORY

"AYE! THAT THEY DID! AND CALIASTROS WOULD STOP AT NOTHING TO FIND THE QUEEN AND HER DAUGHTER, AND DESTROY THEM! LEARN TO FEAR THIS BLACK-HEARTED DEVIL, CONAN, IF YOU VALUE YOUR LIFE AND YOUR REALM."

SO YOU KNOW THIS MAGE RUFIO?

AYE, I KNOW HIM INDEED. MY LIFE'S GOAL IS HIS DEMISE

IF HE HAS CONN WE CAN'T WASTE ANY TIME! FACING CALIASTROS WILL MAKE DEALING WITH CRASSUS LOOK LIKE CHILD'S PLAY.

BEWARE CONAN -- EVEN NOW OPHIR, CORINTHIA, KOTH, BRYTHUNIA, AND HYBERBOREA ARE UNITING AGAINST YOU. WITH CALIASTROS LEADING THEM, YOU HAVE MUCH TO FEAR.

I HEED YOUR WORDS, ZELATA

SAVE YOUR GRATITUDE FOR THE GODS CONAN I HAVE DONE ONLY AS I WAS COMMANDED.

ZELATA, I'D BELIEVE THAT *CONN IS ALIVE* IF I HAD SOME PROOF THAT *CRASSUS IS DEAD*.

YOU'LL HAVE YOUR PROOF, GENERAL

YOUR MAJESTY, WE FOUND HIM IN RIVER. YOU SHOULD RECOGNIZE HIM

AYE, UGLY AS EVER' CRASSUS.

SO, CRASSUS, MY SON HAS MADE YOU PAY FOR YOUR TREACHERY.

HE WAS DEAD WHEN WE FOUND HIM FLOATING IN THE RIVER

WHEN HE DIED, HE RESUMED HIS HUMAN FORM YOU'VE SEEN THE LAST OF THAT UPSTART PRIEST. NOW, WORRY ABOUT CALIASTROS.

MITRA'S CURSE ON THE TRAITOR!

WELL, PALLANTIDES, ARE YOU SATISFIED?

AYE, DERYCK

YOU WERE RIGHT, ZELATA.

ZELATA...?

SHE'S GONE!

RUFIO, YOU AND DERYCK GO FIND CONN, AND THE REST OF YOU CAN DIVIDE THE SPOILS.

IT SHALL BE DONE, KING CONAN, I SWEAR IT.

AYE, IF IT IS THE WILL OF THE GODS.

PALLANTIDES WE MARCH FOR TARANTIA IN TWO DAYS - AND WE'LL MARCH BACK BY WAY OF OPHIR GODS OK NO GODS

AYE, GREAT KING -- OR THE EARTH OR OPHIR WILL HAVE OUR BONES

ENJOY YOUR VICTORY OVER CRASSUS AND XANTALIS, MY BROTHERS..

ENJOY IT WHILE YOU CAN YOU HAVEN T EVEN BEGUN TO RECKON W TH CALIASTROS

WINE -- I'LL DRINK A RIVER OF IT!

DRINK, DOG BROTHERS! DRINK!

AH, THE TASTE OF LOOTED WINE IS SWEET

AND NO KISSES ARE SWEETER THAN THOSE OF CAPTIVE WOMEN!

"I KNOW, YE PRINCE, THAT THE HYBORIAN WORLD NEVER KNEW SUCH REVELRY IN VICTORY THAN THAT WHICH THAT FOLLOWED THE SACK OF MESSANTIA. THE TASTE OF THE WINE THAT FLOWED THERE LINGERED ON THE CONQUERORS' TONGUES UNTIL THE NEXT BATTLE..."

FROM *THE NEMEDIAN CHRONICLES*

AND THE NEXT BATTLE WAS
A GET N COMING HAN-CONAN'S
FORCES CLASHED WITH THE
CIMMERIAN ON THE MEADOW-
LAND BELOW HER.

THEY MET IN A COLLISION
OF SHATTERED LANCES AND
WHIRLING BLADES.

AND THEN THE MAN
THE MAN
CONAN

CONAN
CONAN'S
CONAN
THE CIMMERIAN
ANNIHILATE

TROCERO IS THE TASTE OF BATTLE SWEET TO YOU AFTER THOSE MONTHS AT COURT IN TARANTIA?

AVE MY FRIEND AFTER ATTENDING TO THE AFFAIRS OF STATE SO LONG THE CLASH OF ARMS IS LIKE MUSIC.

SERVIUS HAS SOMETHING TO TELL YOU THAT YOU'LL WANT TO HEAR

THE OPHIRIANS ARE FALLING BACK, BUT THEY HAVE NOWHERE TO RUN. PRISONERS HAVE TOLD US THAT QUEEN LEORA HAS FLED FOR THE CITY OF ARBITANA IN CORINTHIA.

AND THAT'S WHERE DERYCK AND RUFIO WILL GO TO FIND CONN.

SERVIUS TELLS ME THAT YOU'LL FIND QUEEN LEORA IN ARBITANA

SO, YOU'VE HEARD. MY LIEGE THAT'S WHERE WE'RE HEADED NOW

THEN MAY THE GODS RIDE WITH YOU.

WE'LL BE BACK WITH CONN.

CONAN BY MITRA, WHAT DID I TELL YOU? LOOK!

KING CONAN QUEEN LEVIKA HAS FLED THE FIELD THE ARMY OF OTHIR ASKS FOR YOUR TERMS OF SURRENDER.

THEIR NEVER IS UNCONDITIONAL OTHIRIAN LAY DOWN YOUR ARMS AND YOUR LIVES WILL BE SPARED

IF I FOUGHT AN HONORABLE FOE WE JUST WOULDN'T BE RAVAGED BY HUNGER AND WE CAN'T FEED IT

BUT SURELY HUMOR REQUIRES THAT YOU MEET REASONABLE CONDITION

MY OFFER IS GENEROUS TAKE IT OR LEAVE IT

WEAPONS TO THE RIGHT, SOLDIERS.

...RECEIVED BRAX-AL-THAR, WARLORD ... BRYTHUNIA AND ...

BRAX CAN ... MAY HE ... MAKE SUIT HE HAS NO RIGHT TO KEEP THE CHIEFTAINS OF HYPERBOREA WAITING

CALIASTROS DOES THINGS HIS OWN WAY

...

...

THAT'S JUST LIKE THE OLD VIPER TO KEEP EVERYONE WAITING

...

GIVE SANCTUARY TO THE FAIR LEORA, EH?

AYE

...MARRIES HER AND REGAINS HER KINGDOM WILL SHARE HER THRONE, AMONG OTHER THINGS...

...

AND SPARE US YOUR VILE TONGUE, HMM?

HOW IS OUR PRISONER, ...?

ENOUGH OF THIS! CALIASTROS HAS TREATED US LIKE HIS CHATTELS... NOT LIKE ALLIES!

LET'S LEAVE THAT OLD VULTURE TO HIS SPELLS AND POTIONS AND LOOK OUT FOR OURSELVES.

HA HA HA COME MY FRIEND, RECONSIDER..

WHAT ?

I SAID *RECONSIDER*. I WILL TURN THE BATTLE IN *OUR* FAVOR.

DO YOU DOUBT MY WORD?

I DIDN'T SAY I DOUBTED YOU CALIASTROS

DON'T PUT WORDS IN MY MOUTH, CALIASTROS.

YOUR FIGHTING BLOOD HAS COOLED. [illegible] I'LL WARM IT UP FOR YOU!!

NO...NO... STOP IT, CALIASTROS. IT WAS ONLY TALK... JUST TALK. PLEASE I'M BEGGING.

MITRA AND ISHTAR HIS BLOOD IS ON FIRE!

AGHHHH..

CALIASTROS, CUSTOM DICTATES THAT ALL THOSE WHO CAME HERE WERE TO BE GRANTED SAFE CONDUCT. YOU GAVE YOUR WORD.

DID I, LEORA? HOW CAN YOU EXPECT A MAN OF MY AGE TO REMEMBER FROM ONE MOMENT TO THE NEXT, LET ALONE WHAT WAS SAID DAYS AGO?

BUT THIS I DO REMEMBER. YOU ARE A MONARCH IN EXILE WHO HAS BEEN GRANTED SANCTUARY. YOU ARE HERE BY MY SUFFERANCE. DON'T FORGET THAT.

YOU'VE MADE YOUR POINT, CALIASTROS.

I'LL VOUCH FOR LEORA. SHE WON'T FORGET HERSELF AS LONG AS SHE ACCEPTS MY PROTECTION.

SILENCE, BRAX! CHIVALRY DOESN'T BECOME YOU!

WE ALL KNOW WHAT YOU WANT WITH LEORA. FORTUNATELY, SHE HAS BETTER TASTE. HA, HA, HA...

MY LORD CALIASTROS, HOW DO YOU PLAN TO DEFEAT CONAN?

YOU DOUBT..?

YOU *QUESTION* MY METHOD, KING OF BRYTHUNIA?

I ASKED A REASONABLE QUESTION! STAY AWAY FROM ME!

YOUR MAJESTY YOU MISUNDERSTAND ME. THERE ARE TWO KINDS OF PEOPLE IN THE WORLD, THOSE WHO HAVE A DREAM AND THOSE WHO SERVE THE DREAMS OF OTHERS.

ALL THOSE WHO SEEK MY HELP MUST LEARN TO SERVE MY VISION IN MY WAY.

LEORA, SHOW US YOUR NEW PLAYTHING.

HERE HE IS, OUR HONORED GUEST

KEEP SILENT, ALL OF YOU

CONAN'S SON--I SAW HIM IN TARANTIA WHEN HE WAS A BOY NO MISTAKE ABOUT IT

MOST PERCEPTIVE, YOUR MAJESTY THE SON OF OUR MORTAL ENEMY HAS BEEN ROBBED OF HIS MEMORY HE WILL BE THE INSTRUMENT OF CONAN'S DESTRUCTION

LEORA, WHY WAS I BROUGHT HERE?

TO SEE IF ANY OF OUR FRIENDS MIGHT KNOW YOUR IDENTITY.

ALAS MY BOY, WE HAVE FAILED, AT LEAST FOR NOW

RUFIO, YOU *KNOW* THIS PALACE AS WELL AS YOU SAID YOU DID!

I'VE KNOWN THESE PASSAGES SINCE I WAS A BOY, DERYCK.

WHAT I DON'T KNOW IS HOW TO GET CONN OUT OF CALIASTROS'S CLUTCHES.

WE'LL HAVE TO IMPROVISE.

WE MUST GET CONN AWAY FROM THAT HIDEOUS CALIASTROS! I'LL SEE THAT ANCIENT MONSTER DEAD IF IT COSTS ME MY LIFE.

IT WAS YOU WHO SAVED THE ROYAL FAMILY OF CORINTHIA AFTER CALIASTROS ASSASSINATED KING ARCHIDES WASN'T IT?

YES! CALIASTROS WOULD DO ANYTHING TO LEARN WHERE I HID THEM.

THE KING AND QUEEN BROUGHT ME UP IN THE PALACE AND TREATED ME LIKE A MEMBER OF THEIR FAMILY I CAN NEVER REPAY THE DEBT I OWE THEM

SO FOR THEM, I *MUST* DESTROY CALIASTROS!

COME, MY LOVE DRINK YOUR WINE. IT WILL RELAX YOU. YOU'RE TENSE... LIKE A CAGED LION.

A CAGED LION... A LION... I WISH I COULD REMEMBER *SOMETHING*--

LUST!

THAT!

DO YOU ALWAYS PURSUE YOUR SENSE OF DUTY SO IGENTLY, LEORA?

I TOLD YOU TO BE GONE

I'LL LEAVE WHEN I CHOOSE!

WALK OUT OR BE CARRIED OUT. THE CHOICE IS YOURS.

BE QUICK BOY!

STOP IT, ORAX!

DON'T TOUCH HIM, ORAX! WE *NEED* HIM

I WON'T KILL HIM. I'LL JUST CARVE HIM UP A BIT

GUARDS! GUARDS! STOP THEM! THEY'VE GONE MAD!

QUIET, WOMAN! I CAN TAKE CARE OF MYSELF!

AYE, BUT FOR HOW LONG?

YOU'RE QUICK! BUT YOU SHOULD HAVE *RUN* BEFORE YOU CROSSED BLADES WITH ME!

I'LL GELD YOU LIKE A COLT, BOY!

YOU'RE A DEAD MAN, WINDBAG!

ENOUGH, BRAX! YOU KNOW BETTER THAN THIS!

VERY WELL. YOU LEAVE ME NO CHOICE...

I SAID-- ENOUGH!

AGH!

LET THAT SWORD BE, BRAX. YOU'LL FIND IT MUCH TOO HOT TO HANDLE.

THERE IS NO PLACE AT THIS COURT FOR YOUR PETTY JEALOUSY, OR FOR DISOBEDIENCE.

NOW TAKE YOUR SWORD.

AND TAKE YOUR LEAVE.

WHILE YOU STILL CAN.

MY PATIENCE HAS A LIMIT, CALIASTROS!

I'LL BE PATIENT UNTIL OUR BUSINESS IS FINISHED. THEN I'LL MAKE THE YOUNG CUR PAY FOR THIS HUMILIATION

HE REALLY SPOSITION DOESN'T HE?

AS CONN IS ALONE MAKE OUR MOVE.

TAKE HIM AGAINST HIS WILL

THE STENCH OF EVIL ABOUT HIM HE ALWAYS DID

TARANTIA--KING CONAN ARRIVES UNANNOUNCED BEFORE TAKING THE FIELD AGAINST THE KINGDOMS THAT HAVE ALLIED AGAINST HIM.

YOU SHOULD HAVE SENT A HERALD TO ANNOUNCE YOUR ARRIVAL MY HUSBAND.

AND SPOIL THE SURPRISE, ZENOBIA? NO, I DIDN'T WANT ANY ROYAL RECEPTION TO GET IN THE WAY I CAME BACK TO SEE *YOU*...

THERE'S SOMETHING I NEED TO TELL YOU

IT'LL KEEP. THERE ISN'T MUCH TIME AND I WANT TO SPEND EVERY MOMENT WITH YOU.

I'VE LONGED TO HOLD YOU IN MY ARMS FOR MONTHS.

CROM'S THUNDER WOMAN, HAVE YOU PUT ON WEIGHT?

WOMEN WHO ARE EXPECTING CHILDREN USUALLY DO, CONAN.

A CHILD... YOU MEAN MY CHILD *OUR CHILD?*

YOU ARE TO BE A *GRANDFATHER* AS WELL, FATHER. WOULD THAT DEKYCK WERE HERE TO SHARE THESE TIDINGS

THIS IS THE BEST NEWS A MAN COULD HOPE TO HEAR, THE BEST NEWS I'VE HEARD IN A LONG TIME

I PRAYED TO THE GODS FOR A CHILD AND THEY ANSWERED MY PRAYERS, AS WELL AS THOSE OF RADEGUND.

AND YOUR PRAYERS REVEAL YOUR SECRETS NOT ONLY TO THE GODS, QUEEN ZENOBIA, FOR NOW I KNOW HOW TO STRIKE YOUR HUSBAND DOWN.

BAH! WHAT GOOD ARE YOUR MAGICIAN'S SPELLS IF THEY DON'T GIVE US VICTORY IN BATTLE!

BRAX, YOUR LACK OF IMAGINATION IS OVERWHELMING

AH, LEORA, I SEE YOU FOLLOW ME ALREADY SO, I'LL EXPLAIN TO THIS WALKING MOUNTAIN OF MUSCLE.

I'LL DESTROY QUEEN ZENOBIA AND PRINCESS RADEGUND, AS WELL AS THEIR CHILDREN, AND I DESTROY CONAN'S WILL TO FIGHT.

AND THEN WHEN WE RETURN HIS SON PRINCE CONN TO HIM WITH A HYPNOTIC SUGGESTION TO KILL HIS FATHER, THAT WILL BE THE FINAL BLOW.

IN QUEEN LEORA'S QUARTERS IN THE PALACE AT ARBITANA, PRINCE CONN IS UNAWARE OF THE PLANS BEING MADE FOR HIM, UNAWARE OF HIS NAME AND HIS IDENTITY

...UNAWARE OF THE EYES THAT ARE WATCHING HIM..

...UNAWARE OF HIS FATE ..

KEEP A SHARP EYE, KUNJO

AND AND WE'LL HAVE TO MOVE FAST WE MAY HAVE TO OVERPOWER HIM AND LEAD HIM OUT OF HERE

MY PRINCE, I BEG YOU NOT TO CRY OUT

PLEASE, LISTEN TO ME, CONN, AND TRY TO REMEMBER

WHAT...?

...WE'RE YOUR FRIENDS YOUR FATHER SENT US TO RESCUE YOU FROM OUR ENEMIES

AND YOU'RE THE WALKING DEAD YOU FOOLS! HA HA HA HA..

GUARDS! TAKE THEM! WE WANT THEM ALIVE FOR THE TIME BEING

SEND FOR CALIASTROS HE MAY FIND THIS AMUSING, BRAX. HE AND THE JESTER ARE OLD FRIENDS

FRIENDS? *BAH!* THIS STUNTED WEASEL KNOWS WHERE THE ROYAL FAMILY OF CORINTHIA'S BEEN HIDING FOR THE PAST FIVE YEARS

I'LL TAKE THAT SECRET TO MY GRAVE AND I'LL TAKE AS MANY OF YOU AS I CAN WITH ME

GRAB LEORA, DERYCK! SHE'S OUR WAY OUT OF HERE!

AYE.

. . I'VE GOT HER, RUFIO!

DON'T MOVE, BRAX! HE MEANS IT!

DO YOU REALLY THINK CALIASTROS WILL LET YOU WALK OUT OF HERE?

WE WON'T KNOW 'TIL WE TRY

NOW MOVE, MINX!

COME ON, CONN! WE'RE GOING HOME!

COME CLOSER AND I'LL CARVE HER LIP WE AESIR AREN'T AS PARTICULAR ABOUT FEMALE CAPTIVES AS YOU CIVILIZED MEN.

WHERE ARE YOU TAKING ME? WHY DO I FEEL I KNOW YOU?

ALL IN GOOD TIME, MY PRINCE. TRUST ME.

THAT'S FAR ENOUGH! DROP YOUR SWORDS!

DO WHAT HE SAYS... PLEASE...

THIS WAY, DERYCK...

WELCOME BACK, RUFIO. YOUR STAY WILL BE A SHORT ONE.

I'D GLADLY GIVE MY LIFE TO PUT THIS DAGGER IN YOUR VILE HEART, CALIASTROS.

MY ARCHERS ARE IN A POSITION TO FILL YOU WITH ARROWS.

DROP THE DAGGER, RUFIO YOU'LL NEVER BE ABLE TO HIT ME WITH IT.

LET THE AESIR GO HE'S JUST A MERCENARY

DROP THE DAGGER, RUFIO...

YOUR WILL IS TOO STRONG FOR MAGIC TO OVERCOME IT, SO I'LL APPEAL TO REASON. LET LEORA GO AND I'LL GIVE YOUR FRIEND A CHANCE TO LIVE!

RUFIO, DON'T! HE'LL TORTURE YOU TO DEATH!

THERE ISN'T MUCH CHOICE.

GET BACK, ALL OF YOU, OR I'LL SLIT HER THROAT, BY YMIR!

DON'T BE A FOOL, BARBARIAN. CALIASTROS IS WILLING TO GIVE YOU A CHANCE.

SHE'S RIGHT. DROP THE SWORD OR THEY'LL KILL YOU.

YOU WIN, MAGICIAN, AT LEAST FOR NOW.

WHAT NOW, CALIASTROS?

THE JESTER'S FATE IS SEALED AND HE KNOWS IT. BUT HE'LL GIVE THE AESIR AN OPPORTUNITY TO AMUSE US.

DON'T SAY ANY MORE, AESIR.

TAKE THEM TO THE DUNGEON!

LATER...

YOU NEGLECTED TO TELL US THE TRUTH ABOUT YOUR FRIEND'S IDENTITY, RUFIO? YOU ALWAYS WERE A DEVIOUS RASCAL, ALWAYS HIDING THINGS!

I TOLD YOU, HE'S JUST A MERCENARY, CALIASTROS.

IT'S NO USE, RUFIO.

DID YOU REALLY THINK WE WOULDN'T RECOGNIZE KING DERYCK OF ASGARD, CONAN'S SON-IN-LAW?

YOU PROMISED HIM A CHANCE TO LIVE.

HOW CAN YOU EXPECT A MAN OF MY AGE TO REMEMBER FROM MOMENT TO MOMENT, LET ALONE THE WORDS OF AN HOUR AGO?

CALIASTROS, YOU FORKED TONGUE DEVIL!

MAY THE GODS TORMENT YOU FOR YOUR LIES, YOU SEWER SNAKE!

ENOUGH YOU, CLOWN.

BUT WE'LL GIVE THE KING OF THE AESIR A FIGHTING CHANCE. PERSONALLY, I NEVER THOUGHT MUCH OF THE AESIR. THEY'RE WORTHLESS IN ANYTHING MORE THAN A SKIRMISH. BUT *THIS ONE* WILL FIGHT *OUR CHAMPION*.

I HOPE IT'S YOU, KOTHIAN. I'D LIKE TO TWIST A SWORD IN YOUR GUTS.

MAYBE YOU'LL GET A CHANCE/ BARBARIAN.

YOU AND ME... NOW.

AH, BUT FIRST--YOU BATTLE *OUR CHAMPION*.

...AND REMEMBER, THE FIGHT IS TO THE DEATH!

CONTINUED IN ISSUE #45:

CALIASTROS

KING CONAN

MARVEL COMICS GROUP
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New York, New York 10016

MICHAEL HIGGINS
EDITOR
PAT REDDING
MANAGING EDITOR

Attention correspondents: if you don't want your full address printed, please be sure to tell us so!

CONAN THE KING #44 LETTERCOL
Dear Editor and Assistant Editor,

I just finished reading #41. I am glad you had Prince Conn save Rufio. He is one jester who is good to have around in a tight spot. And you should not forget that when it comes time for Conan and Conn to face Crassus in a final battle, that Thoth Amon does live again (although his serpent's ring has been separated from him). Also do not forget that Thoth Amon hates Conan even more than Crassus. Conan will have to deal with Thoth Amon eventually.

I was very sorry to see that you had to let Conan's second son Taurus die, though it was a good thing that at least he knew that he was Conan's son before he died. It was also very good that we find out that Conan's wife, Queen Zenobia, is pregnant again with their fourth child. Though I fear she will not long survive in childbirth if Conan's biography is correct.

Sincerely,
Mark Salom,
Brooklyn, NY

What if it isn't, Mark?

Dear Gods of the Fate of Conan,

The best comic magazine around is definitely CONAN THE KING. Although I enjoy the other Conan mags, I like the older Conan in this magazine better because, instead of charging into battle as the younger Conan does, he thinks out his battle plans first. It isn't just a blood-and-guts, throat-slitting "good time".

Anyway, on to the review of #41. Pallantides, again, was an excellent commander, but I don't think you should have had Crassus "knock off" Taurus. Then again, what will the new children of Zenobia and Conan bring?

Now for some questions that aren't hypothetical:

1.) I've heard a little about the graphic novel CONAN THE REAVER. What will it be about, and when in Conan's life will it take place?

2.) Will you be knocking off any other important characters?

3.) Can't you have Crom helping out Conan sometimes?

4.) What exactly is a No-Prize?

5.) Will you try to have Taurus resurrected, maybe by a traveling wizard?

Jason Beerhalter

1.) CONAN THE REAVER is a tale of Conan as a young thief—buy it and see what it's all about! It's on the rack right now!

2.) What? Spoil the surprises? We're not telling!

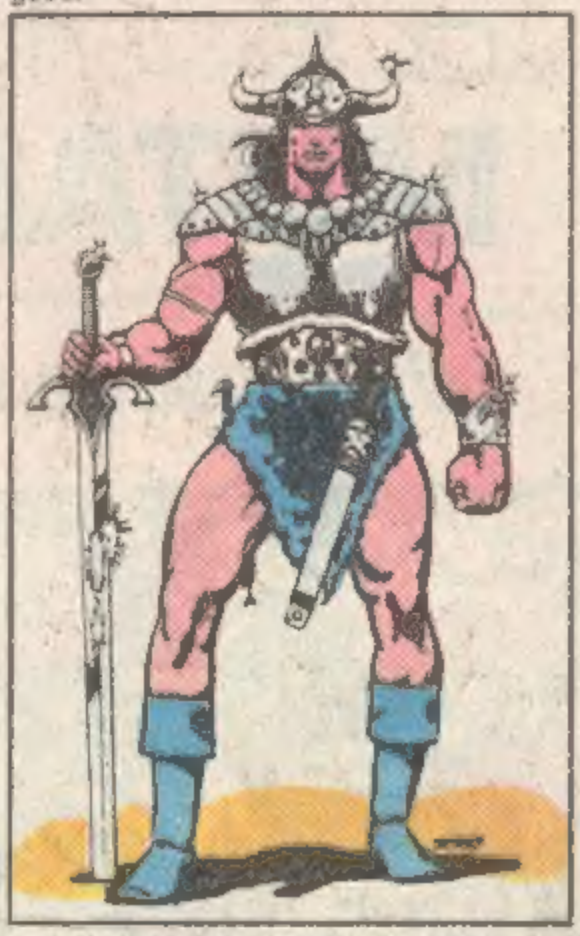
3.) Crom doesn't "help out".

4.) This we cannot reveal.

5.) Not likely.

Dog Brothers,

I very much enjoyed CONAN THE KING #41; however, I felt that the interplay between Conan and his son could have been explored. It would have been interesting, as Conan with his distrust in sorcery tries to understand and cope with his son. It might have brought in some characters we've not seen for a while, such as Pelias the sorcerer (who helped Conan find Zenobia when she was abducted.) He might have been asked to be a royal tutor, to help mold and guide Taurus to make better use of his power for good.



At the end of #41, it is revealed that Queen Zenobia is pregnant with their fourth child, which, according to Howard, means that she will die in childbirth, leading to events listed in the book "Conan of the Isles". I think this is a waste, if Howard had known how popular Conan would become, he probably would have changed his later books on Conan's life. . .I urge you to do so. Change the events and let Zenobia live to have more grandchildren. There is precedent: in the books, all of Conan's children lived, so you have changed the scope of Howard's scripts already. If you want to extend Conan's life, perhaps Crom could be a help, after all, he hasn't done anything lately. He might decide that at his age, Conan might be too old to effectively handle the sorcery of both Crassus and Caliastros. Crom could use his godly powers to enhance Conan with the strength and vitality he had ten years in the past. This would allow more King Conan stories, and you could always go back later to the original text.

It might be interesting if some of those new mercenaries were Amazons from the Black Kingdoms. . .It seems like most other warriors don't like killing women.

Is the Count of Poitain too old for fighting? We haven't seen him in battle for a long time.

Signed respectfully,
Frederick Coff
15 West 81st St.
NYC 10024

Yes, Frederick, most warriors didn't last as long as Conan.

Conan Creators,

I got my first taste of Conan in CONAN THE KING #34. Needless to say, I was not impressed. But yesterday I was browsing through the magazine stand and I ran across CONAN SAGA and THE SAVAGE SWORD OF CONAN. The artwork on those covers was the best I'd seen. The plots were great and the artwork inside was great too! I loved it even in black and white. These two titles had the best artwork I'd ever seen, and I have a hundred and twenty seven comic books! However, I have a bone to pick with you. In SSOC #137, on the last page, you have a picture of Conan fighting with a girl. Now the artwork is excellent on this page, but I have seen the Conan movies and Conan is a *man* and a *warrior*. Any man who fights a girl is a wimp. The art would be excellent if the girl was a man. If you want to keep Conan's macho image, I suggest you refrain from pitting him against women in the future. But until Crom trades in his sword for a baseball bat and joins the Indians, Make Mine Marvel.

Matt Zimm
1520 Valker Lake Rd.
Mansfield, Ohio 44906

You were not impressed? Why not?

Dear Conan gang,

Let me be one of the many to offer my sincere congratulations on an excellent comic book. I have just started reading comic books after a long layoff (fourteen years. . .I'm twenty-four now). CONAN THE KING #30 is what did it. The story was great, the artwork terrific. So I decided to buy the latest issue and I was not disappointed. I now have just about all of the back issues and I have some questions, if you'll permit my asking.

1.) Why is Conan's hair so black? Consider that his age is sixty plus!

Does he use Grecian Formula or does Zenobia dye it for him?

2.) Why did Prince Conn blow off his beautiful little wife, Li Tan, back in Khitai?

3.) Was Pepin (Maloric's son) ever a Black Dragon? In issue #30, after all the Black Dragons were slain, Conan calls out their names: Tarquin. . .Leonidas. . .here it comes—Pepin. . .??? That soft-bellied, sad excuse for a man who almost married Princess (she is really cute) Radegund!

Once again, let me say "Well done!" and "Long live the King!"

Sincerely
Tito

1.) Conan's hair has begun to turn grey. Not all folks age in like manners.

2.) Conn's union with Li Tan was the product of sorcery: a whirlwind romance, ephemeral as cobwebs.

3.) Pepin was apprenticed to the Black Dragons. . .a squire of sorts. This was an unusual situation, caused by political pressure. A bad move on Pepin's part, to accept. It killed him! But, fortunately for Radegund, it got the little weasel out of the picture.